

Loading up

This topic is not as specific to tow vehicles and trailers as other topics that I have covered, so I use the term "RV" here instead because it really doesn't matter what type of RV you have...you should take the time to check this out.

Okay, I can hear you saying, "What's so special about loading up my stuff? I just load it up and go, right?" Well, almost. It wouldn't hurt to check out a few things before going to far first.

Axle weight rating

Everything rolling down the road has a weight rating for all of the axles. Cars, trucks, buses and RV's all have them. You need to find out what your tow vehicle and/or RV axles are rated for. But don't stop there. Look on the sidewall of all the tires to find the...

Tire load rating

On the sidewall of every tire is a maximum weight rating for the tire at its maximum air pressure. Find out what your tires are rated for. An overloaded or under-inflated tire may create more heat than what it was designed for, and this could lead to tire failure (a blow-out). This could lead to serious damage, fire or loss of control over the RV. Not exactly something I would like to have happen!

While you're down there, check to see what the maximum air pressure is and check the tire pressure. Is it at the maximum?

Now what?

Now you need to head down to the scales and do a little weighing to see if the tires and/or axles are overloaded. It is more of a possibility that you may overload a tire before you overload the axle it is on. See the instructions on this website (http://www.trucktires.com/us_eng/library/downloadables/RV_bro/WeighForm.pdf) on how to weigh each axle/tire.

If you find that a tire is overloaded, you have a couple of options.

First, try moving things around inside the tow vehicle and/or the RV until it is balanced better from side to side and re-weigh.

The other option would be to get higher rated tires. You might be thinking the manufacturer would have (and should have) taken the loading of cargo into account in the design and the tire selection. Well, maybe they should have, but in some cases they didn't seem to be thinking that far ahead. If you are faced with this situation, contact your dealer before doing anything. They should be willing to help you work with them and the manufacturer to resolve the issue, hopefully at no additional cost to you.

If this is your first outing with the tow vehicle and/or RV and you find that a tire is overloaded, you should take care of it as soon as possible. When a tire fails, it usually didn't "just happen"; it took several miles for the damage to build up to a point that the tire couldn't take it any more. You may be able to continue on your trip, but pay special attention to the tires along the way. Keep your speed down so as not to build up too much heat in the tires. Check the tire pressure every morning before hitting the road to make sure it is at the proper level. Remember, you want to check the tire pressure when the tire is cold (at outside temperature), not after you've been going down the road for several miles.

If you take good care of your tires, they will last for many trouble-free miles.

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